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PROGRAM CBS Evening News STATION WDVM TV
CBS Network

DATE October 5, 1981 7:00 PM CITY Washington, DC

SUBJECT Removal of Restraints on the CIA

DAN RATHER: Three years ago, President Carter issued an executive order substantially restricting CIA activities in this country. But, as Robert Schakne has found out, the Reagan Administration now has sent to the Senate and House Intelligence Committees rewritten guidelines that appear to remove some of the restraints on the CIA's domestic activities.

ROBERT SCHAKNE: According to Capitol Hill sources, the language is so vague that the CIA could be free to resume domestic spying or engage in covert activities within the United States. The sources say that in one interpretation, the new language would appear to allow the CIA to engage in physical surveillance of Americans within this country, a mission now legally performed only by the FBI. It would also appear to permit the CIA to resume collecting intelligence about the activities of U.S. citizens within the country, would appear to allow intelligence agency to infiltrate and influence domestic organizations, and would appear to authorize secret mail openings without warrants.

Last week Admiral Bobby Inman, the CIA Deputy Director, is reported to have told the Senate Intelligence Committee that the new language was not meant to authorize any substantial CIA domestic activities or interfere with civil liberties protections. But today, when two senators, on behalf of the Intelligence Committee, sought some legal clarification, the Justice Department replied it would not comment on the record.

The new rules are not in their final form. Last March an early draft drew so much congressional criticism that the Administration promised not to promulgate the guidelines until the Intelligence Committees had been consulted and had a chance to comment.